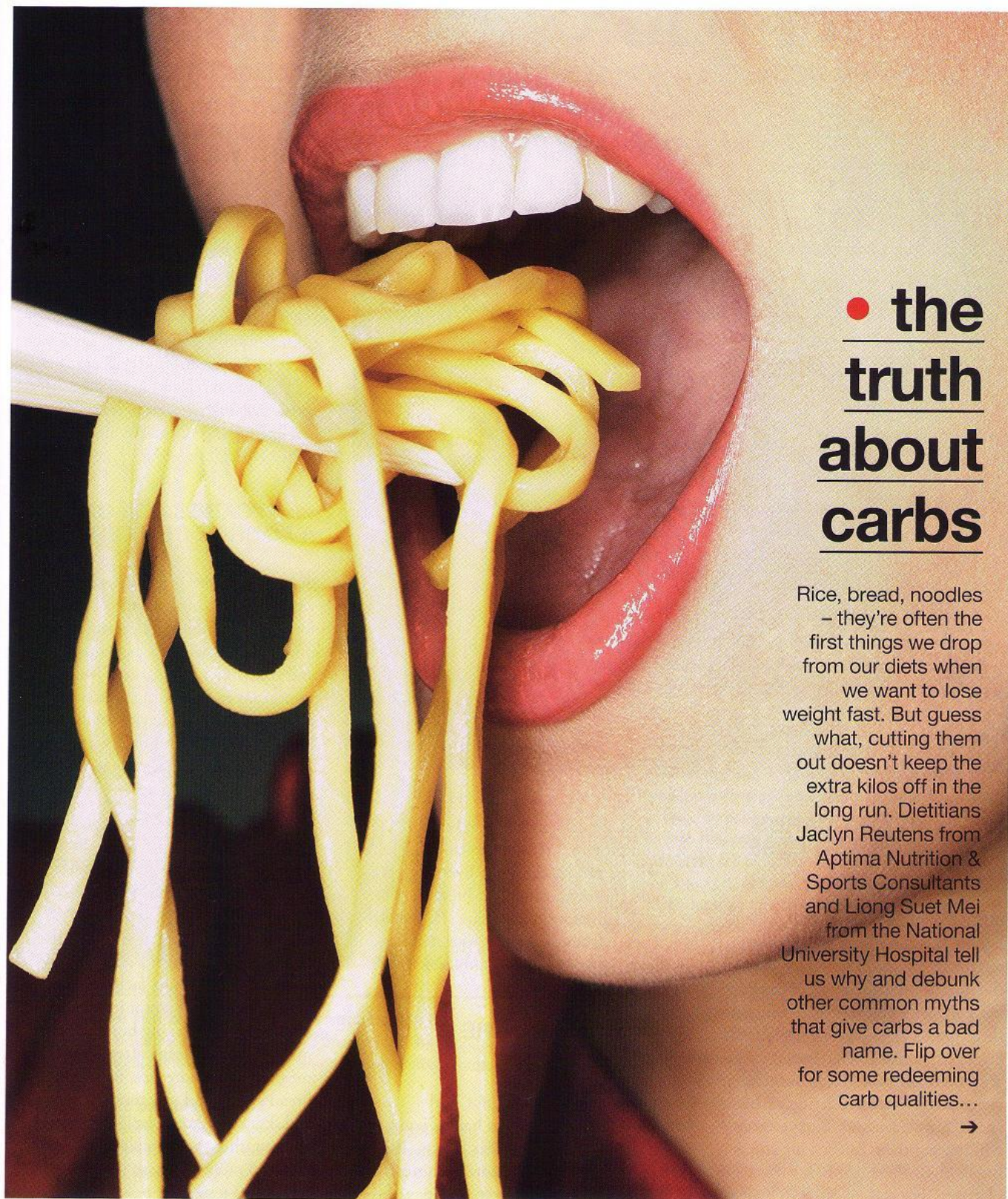


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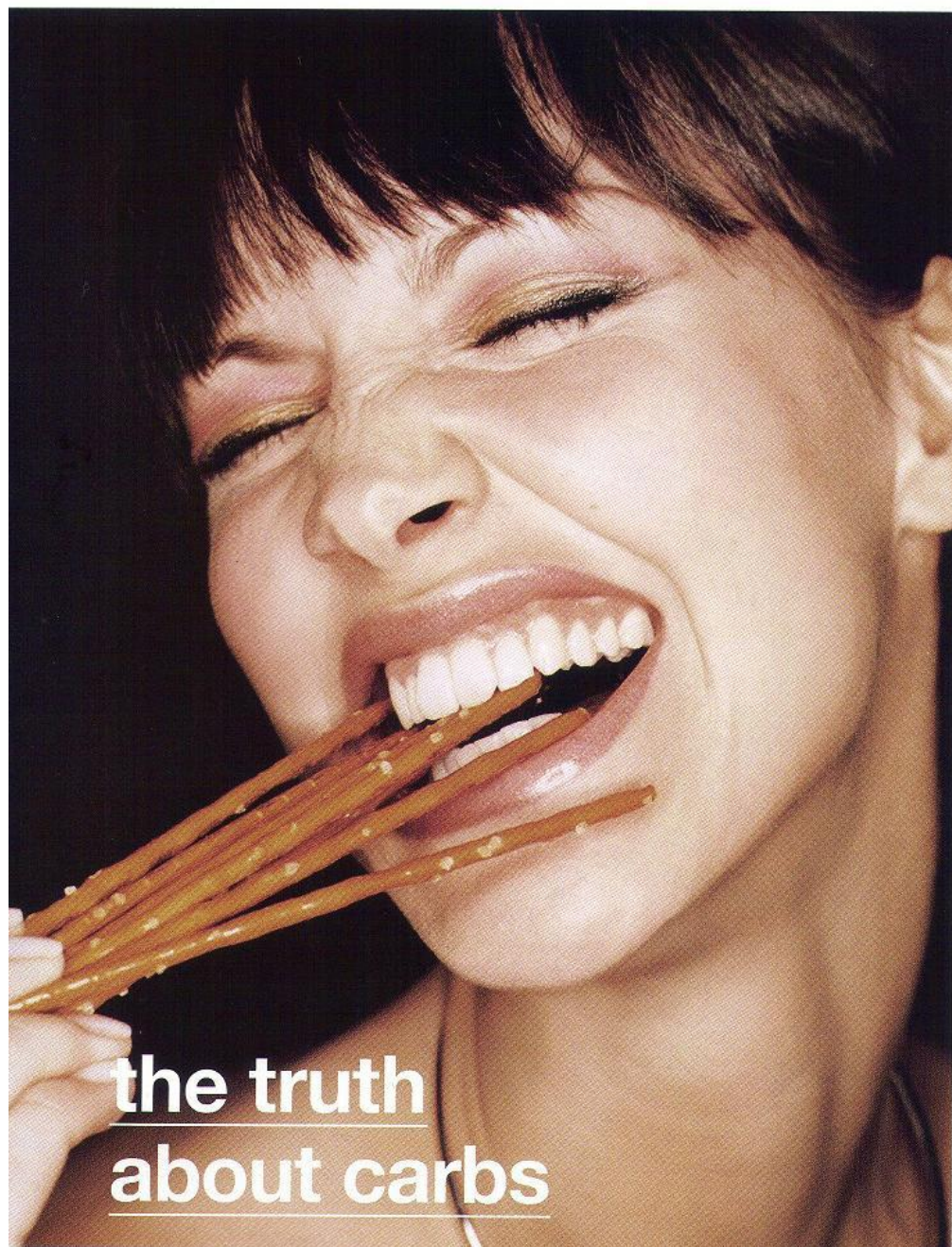
• health • work • money



• the truth about carbs

Rice, bread, noodles – they're often the first things we drop from our diets when we want to lose weight fast. But guess what, cutting them out doesn't keep the extra kilos off in the long run. Dietitians Jaclyn Reutens from Aptima Nutrition & Sports Consultants and Liong Suet Mei from the National University Hospital tell us why and debunk other common myths that give carbs a bad name. Flip over for some redeeming carb qualities...





the truth about carbs

MYTH: "CUT OUT CARBS COMPLETELY TO LOSE WEIGHT"

BUSTED: Skipping carbs will make you lighter, but the effects are short-term, say the dietitians. They hold water in the muscles, so when you burn them off, you lose water too (your body stores three grams of water for every gram of glycogen, which is what excess carbs are stored as). "You'll regain the water weight once you start eating carbs again," says Suet Mei. Furthermore, eliminating them in the long run is unhealthy. Your body first turns to glycogen, but the supply is limited.

Once it's depleted, the body turns to fat and protein. "Substances called ketones will be produced by the liver from fats and these can cause bad breath, lethargy and dehydration," she says. "Generating energy from protein in your muscles and lean tissue will result in muscle loss," adds Jaclyn.

MYTH: "CARBS ARE FATTENING"

BUSTED: Believe it or not, carbs should make up about half of your daily calorie intake, says Jaclyn. The Health Promotion Board recommends consuming five to seven servings of

carbs daily. One serving is two slices of bread, half a bowl of rice or half a bowl of noodles. If you do deskbound work and hardly exercise, stick to five servings, suggests Jaclyn. If you're more active, take seven servings on workout days.

MYTH: "CARBS EATEN AT NIGHT WILL BE STORED AS FAT"

BUSTED: "You shouldn't gain weight if you eat within your calorie needs, regardless of timing," says Jaclyn. But, spacing out your carb intake throughout the day is better than loading up at dinner. That'll keep your energy levels up as they are your body's fuel of choice. "If your brain has to tap on other sources of energy such as protein or glycogen, the process may make you feel light-headed," she says.

MYTH: "CARBS ARE ONLY A SOURCE OF ENERGY"

BUSTED: Besides providing glucose, which is the primary source of fuel for the brain and muscles, carbs allow proteins to be used for building muscle and repairing body tissues. They are important in regulating metabolism and appetite, says Jaclyn. Soluble fibre in carbs like oats and barley grains can reduce blood cholesterol levels, adds Suet Mei. Fibre also helps keep bowel movement regular.

MYTH: "CARBS MAKE ME FEEL SLUGGISH"

BUSTED: It isn't the carbs per se that causes lethargy but the quantity you're consuming. Explains Jaclyn: "When you digest carbs, serotonin is released. Serotonin is a relaxing hormone that makes you feel sleepy after a large meal." So the more rice, noodles or bread you've had, the more tired you'll feel. Eat complex carbs like whole grains rather than simple ones. They're digested more slowly so the energy is released at a steadier pace.